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Notes of the month.

We wish to give prominence in our columns this month to the letter recently issued by His Majesty the King to his subjects. We do this not merely because of its importance and our hearty approval of the proposal it makes, but also because we would commend it most heartily to the ministers and members of our different congregations. We trust that they will make it convenient to carry out the suggestion, and thus fall in with the majority of the churches. A further suggestion, sent out by the officials of the Red Cross Society, that collections be taken up in the churches at the special services on January 6th, is deserving of sympathetic consideration. The following is the text of the King's letter:—

TO MY PEOPLE.

The world-wide struggle for the triumph of right and liberty is entering upon its last and most difficult phases. The enemy is striving by desperate assault and subtle intrigue to perpetuate the wrongs already committed, and stem the tide of a free civilisation.

We have yet to complete the great task to which more than three years ago we dedicated ourselves. At such a time I would call upon you to devote a special day to prayer that we may have the clear-sightedness and strength necessary to the victory of our cause.

This victory will be gained only if we steadfastly remember the responsibility which rests upon us, and in a spirit of reverent obedience ask the blessing of Almighty God upon our endeavours.

With hearts grateful for the Divine guidance which has led us so far towards our goal, let us seek to be enlightened in our understanding and fortified in our courage in facing the sacrifices we may yet have to make before our work is done.

I, therefore, hereby appoint 6th January, the first Sunday of the year, to be set aside as a special day of prayer and thanksgiving in all the churches throughout my dominions, and require that this proclamation be read at the services held on that day.

GEORGE R.I.

7th November, 1917.

* *

We were glad to note that two of our organizations in England have realised that the burden of the war is being greatly felt by many of the ministers of our Free Churches, and that they are taking practical steps to ease that burden. This is a matter which also concerns us, as some of our ministers in Ireland are in receipt of grants from

the Sustentation Fund and the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. It is therefore a matter of sincere satisfaction to us that such Irish ministers are likely to share in the projected assistance. But in order to make the latter adequate, our congregations should endeavour to increase their contributions to the funds of one of the two organizations. With that end in view, we give publicity to the appeal :—

WAR BONUS TO OUR MINISTERS.

The financial strain imposed on many of our ministers by the increased cost of living is very severe, and falls with especial weight upon the smaller incomes. The managers of the Sustentation Fund have resolved to give a Christmas Bonus of £10 to all ministers of congregations which are in receipt of their grants whose total income does not exceed £200. This may, perhaps, absorb about £750. The Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association will assist in providing a War Bonus of £10 to all other ministers of congregations whose income in like manner does not exceed £200. This may involve a further expenditure of £750.

" Association Sunday " falls this year on November 18th, and the Committee venture to suggest that contributors to the Annual Collection (whether taken on that or any other Sunday) should bear in mind the hardships of many of the poorer ministers, and should, by generous donations, raise a sufficient sum to enable the Committee to make this benefaction of goodwill without impairing the general efficiency of the Association's work.

Anyone prevented from contributing to the Association Sunday Collections may send a donation for this special purpose to the Treasurer of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, Essex Hall, Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C. 2. Cheques should be made payable simply : " B. & F. Unitarian Association."

J. ESTLIN CARPENTER,
President, British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

A correspondent, who is preparing a bibliography of the Belfast Periodical Press, is anxious to acquire a copy of the three volumes of " The Disciple," and any of our readers who may possess such should kindly communicate with the Editor. If not a gift, the price should be reasonable. The same correspondent would also like to see a copy of " The Beth Berei Magazine " for 1852. This was edited by the Rev. David Magennis. Would our readers kindly look through their books and let us know if they could lend the magazine for a time.

* *

We look forward with mingled feelings to a fourth Christmas celebration synchronous with a terrible and ever-extending war. Amid the thunder of great guns and the bursting of bombs, there is some likelihood that the Christmas message of " Peace on earth to men of good-will " may be unheard, or at least unheeded. Yet it remains for us, the members of a Christian Church, to re-affirm our belief in the ultimate triumph of the Christian message. The things that conflict therewith, and threaten to obscure its meaning and mission, must be regarded as only temporary, while the great ideal that Christ proclaimed and pre-figured must be thought of as incessantly desired and eternally valid. Even while we prosecute this war with the heartfelt conviction that only the victory of our cause can make an abiding peace possible, we must think of warfare amongst the nations as a negation of the song of the angels. And if we would forget for a time the dissonance, we can do so by embracing in our thoughts and in our kindly intentions the brave men on sea or land, or in the air, who are fighting for the restoration of a stable peace. Let us make it possible for them, amid the scenes of war, to have some measure of Christian cheer and comfort. We ourselves wish for all who may read these words every blessing and happiness this Christmas time, and may the latter speedily be succeeded by such a turn of events as shall make peace speedy in its coming and stable in its character.

It will be of interest to our readers to learn that the Bangor Presbytery has granted leave of absence to the Rev. J. A. Kelly, of Dunmurry, in order that he might take up a period of war work with the Y.M.C.A. in France. It will probably be towards the end of the year before our ministerial friend is able to give effect to his intention, but whenever he goes he will carry with him the best wishes of many friends.

A Thought for the Month

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON AND SPIRIT.

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."—Luke ii. 20.

"The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for Thee?
My soul's a shepherd too; a flock it feeds
Of thoughts, and words, and deeds:
The pasture is Thy word; the streams, Thy grace,
Enriching all the place:
Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Outsing the daylight hours."

—GEORGE HERBERT.

* *

"Christmas is, indeed, the season of regenerated feeling—the season for kindling, not merely the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart. The scene of early life again rises green to memory beyond the sterile waste of years; and the idea of home, fraught with the fragrance of home-dwelling joys, reanimate the drooping spirit, as the Arabian breeze will sometimes waft the freshness of the distant fields to the weary pilgrim of the desert."

"Even the sound of the waits, rude as may be their minstrelsy, breaks upon the watches of a winter night with the effect of perfect harmony. As I have been awakened by them in that still and solemn hour 'when deep sleep falleth upon man,' I have listened with a hushed delight, and connecting them with the joyous occasion, have almost fancied them into another celestial choir. How delightfully the imagination, when wrought upon by moral influences, turns everything into melody and beauty!"—WASHINGTON IRVING.

* *

. . . Christmas was close at hand, in all its bluff and hearty honesty; and it was the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness. The old year was preparing, like an ancient philosopher, to call his friends around him, and amidst the sound of feasting and revelry to pass gently and calmly away. . . .

"And numerous indeed are the hearts to which Christmas brings a brief season of happiness and enjoyment. How many families, whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide, in the restless struggles of life, are then re-united, and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual good-will, which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight, and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that the religious belief of the most civilised nations, and the rude traditions of the roughest savages, alike number it among the first joys of a future state of existence, provided for the blest and happy! How many old recollections, and how many dormant sympathies, does Christmas time awaken!"

—CHARLES DICKENS.

Obituary.

MRS. BATES.

Ballycarry has sustained a loss in the death of Mrs. Bates, eldest daughter of Mr. Wm. Burns. She was married only six weeks ago in our church at Templepatrick. After an attack of apoplexy, she survived but a few hours. Twenty-eight years of age, she had been a most devoted daughter and helper in all her father's affairs. Sincere sympathy goes out to her bereaved father and husband, who have been called to endure this severe trial. From her childhood she had been a faithful attender at her Sunday School and Church.

SECOND-LIEUT. PERCIVAL GODDING, R.I.R.

The above officer was born in London, and connected with the Wandsworth Unitarian Christian Church. Its minister, the Rev. W. G. Tarrant, B.A., proved a helpful and sympathetic friend when Mr. Godding decided to enter the ministry, and with his encouragement the latter took up a course of study at the Unitarian Home Missionary College. Before the expiration of his course (1910–12) Mr. Godding accepted an invitation to become minister of the Ballyclare Church, and entered upon his duties in 1912. Later he decided to enter the Army, and with that end in view became a member of the Officers' Training Corps at Queen's University, Belfast. This led to his proceeding as a cadet to Fermoy. His work there caused him to be recommended for a Commission as Second-Lieut. He is at present in Newtownards for further training, but will ere long proceed to the front, carrying with him the heartiest good wishes for successful work there, and a safe and speedy return to his civilian duties here.

"THE PHYSICAL WELFARE OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN." IV.

BY S. SHANNON MILLIN, B.A., Barrister-at-Law.

In the current number of the "Quarterly Review" there is an interesting article entitled "The State and the Mother," which well merits a careful reading. The writer of that article estimates that since the memorable 4th August, 1914, a quarter of a million dead children have been avoidable casualties on the Home Front.

What a reflection on our legislators and the administrators of that complex system of enactments commonly called Public Health Acts! In view of the loss of manhood on the sacrificial altar of Mars, well indeed may the nation, like Rachel of old, weep for her children, "because they are not."

In considering the question of infant mortality, we must admit at the outset that even under the most favourable circumstances there will always be a certain loss of infant life in the first year, which may be regarded as a "natural" loss, that will be uninfluenced by man's efforts to arrest, as it were, the attempt of Nature to eliminate the unfit. But even making allowance for this "natural" loss which occurs from developmental conditions during the first month, and which amounts to from 25 to 30 per thousand births, there still remains a considerable number of deaths due entirely to preventable causes. The number per annum may be safely estimated at not less than 60,000, each one of whom is a potential wealth-producer lost to the State.

It is a significant fact that there is a constant and very marked difference between the death-rates of town and country, and further that infant mortality is more pronounced in urban districts than even the death toll from tuberculosis. Statistics, spread over a number of years, show that infant mortality attains its maximum in industrial towns and mining districts. Now, what are the factors which are primarily responsible for this unnecessary loss of life in towns? They may be taken as 8 in number:—Defective Sanitation, Poverty, Overcrowding, Bad Housing, Disease or Insufficient Nutrition of Mother, Industrial Employment of Mother, Absence of Breast-feeding, and Maternal Ignorance. In how far each of these contributes to the excessive death rate it is hard for a layman to form an opinion, considering that medical experts hold such divergent views on the subject. Sir Arthur Newsholme, M.D., says:—"Infant mortality is the most sensitive index we possess of social welfare and of sanitary administration, especially under urban conditions." Sir George Newman, M.D., says:—"It is now a well-established truism to say that the most injurious influences affecting the physical condition of young children arise from the habits, customs, and practices of the people themselves, rather than from external surroundings or conditions. The environment of the infant is its mother. Its health and physical fitness are dependent primarily upon her health, her capacity in domesticity, and her knowledge of infant care and management." W. A. Brend, M.D. (State Medicine), B.Sc., says:—"The excess of infant mortality is due to some factor or factors in industrial towns, the centres of large cities, and mining areas, of which possibly the most important is a polluted state of the atmosphere." E. Coey Bigger, M.D., says:—"Poverty, by means of the influence which it exerts on the parents, the food and the environment of the infant, is a serious factor in the causation of infant mortality."

LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

To be used in accordance with the Scheme of Bible Instruction for 1917 arranged by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.

December 2. *Sodom and Gomorrah.* Read Genesis xviii. 20-33, xix. 24-26. *Key Text,* Psalm i. 1, 2.

General Note.—The River Jordan, the one considerable river of Canaan or Palestine, flows into an intensely salt lake 46 miles long by 10 broad called the Dead Sea, which is 1,300 feet deep, and its surface about the same depth below the level of the Mediterranean, and nearly 4,000 feet below Jerusalem. According to tradition, there were once two cities in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, whose names, Sodom and Gomorrah, became a by-word for wickedness for all time: and it was believed that in the days of Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, God destroyed those cities because of their iniquities. The Bible story tells us that Abraham's nephew, Lot, lived in

Sodom with his wife and his two married daughters, and Abraham—no doubt because he was thinking of these friends of his—became greatly concerned about the fate of the city. But the thing he was most anxious to be sure about was that the Judge of all the earth would do right. The wicked might deserve to be destroyed; but it seemed a dreadful thing to him that the righteous should be slain together with the wicked—if destruction was the judgment which God was to bring upon the city. The Sodomites were mostly very bad people, but, whilst Lot was not a very good man perhaps, he was not like them; and there might be others as good as he. In the sequel it transpired that there were not so many as ten righteous people in Sodom, and Lot and his family were warned to leave the city before destruction came. To his sons-in-law, when he tried to rouse them to a sense of their danger, he seemed as one that mocked; and his wife, looking back upon the city after leaving it, was converted into a pillar of salt.

v. 21. We cannot very well speak of God without using figurative language about him; thus we speak of his looking down from heaven: the Biblical story-teller goes a little further, saying that God came down from heaven to see what was being done on earth.

v. 22. The two men were heavenly messengers or angels.

v. 23. We speak of communing with God, *i.e.*, holding spiritual intercourse with Him—"in our hearts," as we say—without words: the Biblical narrator describes this as a verbal conversation.

v. 27. Abraham's style of speech is exceedingly humble. He describes himself as dust, with reference to the creation of his outward frame from the dust or substance of the earth (see Genesis ii. 7), and as ashes, with reference to the final decay of his body when his life shall have burnt out, so to speak (Op. Genesis ii. end of v. 19).

xix. 26. This part of the legend may have originated in the fact that pillars occasionally become detached under the action of rain from a great range of cliffs consisting of rock-salt at the south-west end of the Dead Sea.

(*For elder scholars*, or, simplified, for younger ones.—The story of Sodom and Gomorrah and the narrow escape of Lot, "as a brand plucked out of the burning," serves as an impressive allegory. The city of destruction is the world itself: that is to say, the multitude of its thoughtless, irreverent, impious inhabitants, who allow themselves to be drawn away from God by their own lusts, and being enticed, indulge in the pleasures of sin, to the damage, and too often to the ruin, of their souls. No one can abide in the midst of such a world without the danger of conforming to its customs and its character, and of being involved in the same fatal ruin; the God-fearing man will not dare to expose himself to the allurements of that ungodly company, but must flee for refuge into some little world that is free from its temptations, however near it may be; and if, when he has resolved manfully to turn from its iniquities, there remains in his mind a recollection of the pleasures of that larger world, let him remember the warning of Lot's wife, and not look back.)

December 9. *Hagar and Ishmael.* Read Genesis xxi. 9-20. *Key Text*, Genesis xxi. 18

General Note.—Like many a young man of our own day, Abraham had been called to leave his native land and all his old associates. He had felt that there was that in him which encouraged the belief that God would enable him to work out a goodly destiny. In doing so, he shewed great faith, for he set out, not knowing whither he went, trusting to God to direct him and to shew him in due course a place to sojourn in and in which to take up his permanent abode. The great desire of his heart was to have a son, for he was ambitious of making a great name for himself, as the patriarch of a nation. Yet, so the legend goes, years and years past by, and still Abraham and Sarah continued childless. But when most would have lost all hope, Abraham still had

faith. At last, despairing for herself, Sarah, in accordance with what was considered lawful in those days, allowed her husband to take Hagar, her slave, for a kind of secondary wife, and she had a child called Ishmael. Afterwards Sarah herself gave birth to a child, and he was called Isaac.

vv. 9, 10. *Mocking*—"making fun" of Isaac, as we might say. This is the meaning which Saint Paul evidently found in the Hebrew. Isaac's mother would not unnaturally be offended at such impertinence towards her son, and she would quite naturally hold Ishmael's mother to blame for permitting it. Possibly the Hebrew means no more than that Sarah saw the son of Hagar playing. In that case Sarah's conduct would be natural perhaps, but not so well justified. It would simply arise in that case from dislike for poor Ishmael out of jealous regard for Isaac, her own little boy. Any way, she would not consent to Ishmael being recognised as a son of Abraham, although he was actually Isaac's step-brother.

v. 13. *Thy seed* is a quaint expression, but at the same time a beautiful recognition of the truth that we grow up as plants do from the seed of parent plants. (*For elder scholars.*—The seed of flowering plants have both a father and a mother. Often fathers and mothers are parts of the same plant; but sometimes there are fathers only on one plant and mothers only on another.)

v. 14. The article called a *bottle* would be formed of the skin of a goat or a kid, sewn up so as to shew pretty much the form of the living animal, but without its head. Beersheba was near the southern border of the land of Canaan, far from the home of Abraham.

Observations.—This story of Hagar and Ishmael illustrates various truths concerning the dealings of God with men. Especially two things :—

(*a*) Although human beings are often unjust or unfair or unmerciful to each other so that one would seem to have the power and the will to ruin another, the evil plight of the latter is not overlooked by the Almighty (*e.g.*, The Pilgrim Fathers).

(*b*) When one is in great straits, and seems to be at the end of one's resources, one's eyes are often opened to some unexpected help or some solution of the difficulty (*e.g.*, Robert Bruce).

Conclusion.—That so long as we have life we are to put forth what effort we may to help ourselves—so long as we are alive—to have faith in ourselves and *faith in God.*

December 16. *Abraham's Sacrifice.* Read Genesis xxii 1-19. *Key Text,* I. Cor. x. 13.

General Note.—If "the thing was grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son," namely, that he should be asked by Sarah, his wife, to cast out Ishmael, so that he would become lost to him, it may well be imagined that it would be a far more grievous trial to him to lose his other son, Isaac, the son of Sarah, on whom was founded the hope of his ambition to build up a family and nation. Yet, according to the legend, his willingness to part with Isaac, supposing it to be demanded by the will of God, was actually to be put to the test, and that it was not found wanting, constitutes him a most noble example of a man of faith. How many of us would be willing to profess our faith in God so long as we saw the working out of our heart's desire, because we should see in that the evidence of God's faithfulness to us! But how many of us would preserve our faith and persevere in faithfulness to God, if, like Abraham, we saw everything turning out adversely for our dearest wish, with the loss of that which for the time being seemed all that could make life worth having? We may well be shocked at first hearing that it could enter into the thought of Abraham that God could demand his son Isaac for a burnt offering. But several points should be borne in mind in that connection :—(*a*) It was not all at once, but by degrees, that men discovered the character of the Almighty to be that of the "heavenly Father"; (*b*) sacrifices of precious belongings were often made in ancient times under the

belief that God's favour and mercy, dependent upon His satisfaction with the worshipper, could only be expected if the worshipper were willing to make such sacrifice; (*c*) in accordance with such belief, human sacrifices, the victim being sometimes the nearest and dearest relative of the worshipper, were offered up by other peoples long after the Hebrews had gained enough spiritual enlightenment to discontinue them; (*d*) it is to be considered to the credit of Abraham, on the one hand, that he was ready to give up the son who was so precious to him, and therewith all his hopes (as if he were saying to God, "Not my will, but Thine, be done"), and an honour to him, on the other, that through the revelation granted to him the world was to obtain the truer conception of the divine goodness.

The reticence, but feeling of the narrator.—Although the writer does not enlarge upon the feelings of the father and son, he clearly and sympathetically indicates them here and there:—(*a*) v. 2—not simply—"Take thy son," but "thy son, thine only son [thy son] whom thou lovest [so much]. (*b*) vv. 7, 8—not simply—"Father" and "Son," but (more affectionately) "My Father," "My son." (*c*) vv. 6, 8—twice over, impressively (as if in solemn anticipation of the time that Abraham must be prepared for, when he himself would be going alone) *they went both of them together.* (*d*) v. 8. The answer of Abraham shows how he painfully postpones as long as possible the dreadful truth he has in store for Isaac.

Concluding Note.—Comparable with the faith of Abraham is that of another Bible hero, viz., Job, who, on hearing of the sudden death of his seven sons and three daughters, besides the loss of all his possessions, said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

December 23. (Christmas Lesson). *The Angels' Song.* Read Luke ii. 8-20. *Key Text,* Luke ii. 14.

General Note.—According to the first Gospel and the third, Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judea, though there are differences in other respects in the story of the nativity as given by the two. According to Luke, his parents were on a journey, and arrived at Bethlehem the night that Jesus was born; and as there was no proper room for them in the inn (or rather *caravanserai,* or public resting-place provided for the convenience of travellers), at which they wished to pass the night, they laid the new-born infant in a manger.

v. 11. King David was also a native of Bethlehem; and, although there is much reason to think there was no true record of the descent of Jesus from his ancestors, not long after his death, and possibly by some people during his life-time, it came to be believed that he was a descendant in the direct line from David. (*For elder scholars.*—The term Saviour, as applied to Jesus by the angel, is perhaps somewhat vague in its intended significance. The appellations of *Saviour* and *Lord,* as applied to Jesus in this verse, together with the reference to good tidings in the verse before, are comparable with the language of some Greek inscriptions dating from a few years before the birth of Jesus, and referring to Augustus, the nephew of Julius Cæsar and first Roman Emperor, in the following terms:—"The birthday of the god (*i.e.,* Augustus!) is become the beginning of glad tidings through him to the world,". . . "The Saviour of the human race.") Whatever may have been the meaning belonging to the term *Saviour,* as originally intended in this verse, it has come to be associated with the idea of Jesus as a Saviour of men from the dominion of sin.

Christ is the Greek term for the Hebrew *Messiah*—anointed, and here denotes that Jesus was charged with a special divine commission—first to the people of Israel, and secondly to the whole world.

Lord signifies that Jesus is appointed to have authority among men.

v. 12. *A sign* that the angel was not a mere hallucination or his words a delusion. That the new-born infant

would turn out all that the angel predicted could not be verified for the present; but the truth of the other statement—that he was lying in the manger—the shepherds could put themselves in a position to verify at once; and, finding that much true, they would naturally be prepared to take the rest for truth likewise.

Christmas Day (25th December) is the day that was chosen long ago (4th century) for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The actual date of his birth had been irrecoverably forgotten. Actually it must be considered most improbable that shepherds near Bethlehem would have kept their flocks in the fields all night at that time of year. But the exact date, much as we might wish to know it, is not of much importance. It is well enough to commemorate the glad tidings of the nativity year by year, and it is well to have a particular day for the purpose fixed by general consent.

The Legend.—Nowadays there are not many people who feel able to take the story of the angel and the shepherds for anything more substantially true than a legend. But to call it a legend does not imply that it is of no value, or even that it is devoid of all truth. On the contrary, it is most valuable as proving the truth of the fact that there were at the time that the Gospel was written (at least as early as 100 A.D., if not, as in the opinion of some first-rate scholars, as early as 80 A.D.), and probably before that date, as it is not likely that the evangelist himself originated the legend, that at that comparatively early date, long before the Christian religion had begun to gain much ground, and whilst its adherents were acquainted with abundant tribulations at the hands of a hostile world, there were already many Christians who not merely found in Jesus a Saviour for themselves, but confidently believed that in due course he would be recognised as a Saviour for the world at large—a *very notable fact* (when one considers it) that they should have held that belief in the circumstances of their generation.

December 30. *Review.*

—Rev. Eustace Thompson.

SAVING HUMAN LIFE.

An Appeal to the Churches for Help.

By Dr. John Campbell.

Within the past few years there has grown up a feeling in the minds of many that the methods of presenting religion to the people must soon undergo a great change. This change will take the form of putting much more emphasis on conduct than has hitherto been done. So intense and so widespread has the conviction that such a change is necessary now become that ministers of Orthodox Churches have begun to speak openly and favourably of it. That it will come is devoutly to be hoped, because it is essential that the most powerful influences should be brought to bear on the government of the conduct of the individual through life. By asking men to live up to a high standard of conduct you not only benefit the individual man, but you also greatly help all those with whom he is brought in contact. This new Protestant Reformation, which appears to be imminent, will aim at an improved moral consciousness. It will increase the feeling of responsibility which each one should have for his own welfare. It will drive home the fact that each one is as responsible for his neighbour's well-being as for his own. It will even focus attention on the scientific fact that those living now have in their power the spiritual, mental, and physical health of the generations that are to come. The threefold benefit which will be conferred on humanity by this change in the attitude of their religious directors is too great to be at present generally appreciated and too important to be easily over-stated. It will, amongst other things, greatly reduce the amount of disease. It is hard to say exactly what proportion of the work of the medical profession is a result of the conduct, or rather of the misconduct, of mankind, but it is certain a very large amount of existing disease of mind and body would be at once stamped out if a higher tone

pervaded all sections of society. When religious bodies place a new emphasis on conduct there will be a great

SAVING OF HUMAN LIFE.

From time immemorial the destruction of human life has been looked upon with horror. The story of Cain and Abel shows us in dramatic fashion the repugnance with which men, even in very ancient times, regarded the taking of a fellow-creature's life. At a later date the principle enjoined in this old story came to be crystallised into the Commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder." The Churches and the Law have united in upholding the necessity for observing this Commandment, and, under their influence, a strong body of public opinion has grown up, which regards the wilful destruction of human life as the most detestable act anyone can commit. Nevertheless, deaths are daily taking place all over the country as a result of the conduct of individuals in the community, whose actions are uncensured by the Churches, untrammeled by the law, and unimpeached by their own consciences. This state of things results from the spread of infectious and contagious diseases. It may be truly said that these occurrences are not wilful, and are the result of ignorance and thoughtlessness rather than of malicious intent. This being so, it is incumbent upon us to endeavour to enlighten such culpable ignorance and to eradicate such pernicious thoughtlessness. In this educative and life-saving work the Churches can do an enormous amount of good. It is not enough for them to say to the people, "Thou shalt not kill." It is necessary that they should also point out that the Commandment refers not only to death by deliberate violence, but also to death brought about by the neglect of the great Christian precept, "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you." The influence of the Churches in thus preventing the spread of disease would be invaluable. They could sharpen the public conscience in regard to the spread of infection. They could lessen the spread of many diseases by insisting on the supreme necessity for practical religion. The signs of the times seem to point to the realisation of this state of things. There appears to be a likelihood that the concerns of every-day life will become more and more prominent in religious teaching, and that people will be called upon to cultivate the practical as well as the mystical and emotional sides of their nature.

That there is plenty of room for improvement in our behaviour towards one another in regard to the spread of infection in Belfast may be seen, at a glance, in the Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year 1916. We have there set forth a table of the number of deaths from various causes. Bearing in mind the fact that the common infectious diseases are well known by the most ignorant to be carried from one person to another, and to be almost always conveyed from a diseased to a healthy person by personal contact, we realise from the Report how little regard most people have for the welfare of their neighbours—how often they omit to keep in mind their duty to their neighbours—and how often their omission ends in the death of a human being. In 1916, in the City of Belfast, *Measles* caused 191 deaths. For everyone of those deaths someone was to blame. Each of those 191 victims got the disease from some other patient who was allowed to associate with others while still in the infective stage.

In 1916, in the City of Belfast, *Whooping Cough* caused 120 deaths. Again, someone was responsible for every death. In the case of this disease parents as a rule take no precautions to prevent its being spread by their children to the children of others. In the crowded back streets some excuse may be offered as a mitigation of the offence, but the culpable carelessness does not end with the back streets. The educated and the wealthy are equally to blame. They allow their children to spread the germs of death not only in the City in which they dwell, but often also in seaside health resorts, to which they send their diseased children to mix with and infect the healthy.

Of the 52 deaths from *Scarlet Fever*, and of the 28 deaths from *Diphtheria*, the same might be said. These diseases are all spread mainly by the disregard of people for the well-being and comfort of others. They will not act properly towards their neighbours. If they did the amount of infectious disease in Belfast would be notably lessened at once.

Here is a splendid field for missionary work on the part of the Churches. The failure to observe one of the most important precepts of the Christian religion is largely responsible for some 400 deaths from diseases well known to be infectious, and this in the course of one year.

Consumption caused 830 deaths in the City during 1916. Of the spread of tubercular infection one cannot speak so strongly as in regard to the dissemination of Measles, Whooping Cough, Scarlet Fever, and Diphtheria. The difficulties surrounding the prevention of this disease are so great that we cannot blame its unfortunate victims for not taking stringent precautions. Nevertheless, the prevention of Consumption is one in which the Churches should actively interest themselves. They could do much to educate the people in regard to its danger and to inspire those who have the disease and those who purvey milk and flesh meat with the desire to help in its extermination. The fact that, in Belfast, 1,131 deaths were due, in 1916, to the various forms of tubercular disease is sufficient to show how serious the matter is and how much we need the help of the Churches in the fight against the malady.

Diseases of the Respiratory System, such as Pneumonia and Bronchitis, accounted for 1,176 deaths during 1916. Now, these diseases most frequently begin as a common cold. It is pretty well known nowadays that a common cold, or influenza, or call it by what name you will, is infectious, and conveyed from one to another. Yet how many people take any precautions to prevent their "cold" being communicated to others, even to members of their own families? Very few. Most people distribute their infection in shop and office, warehouse and workshop, tram and train, theatre and church, Sunday school and day school, with a cheery disregard of consequences. As a result, you have your 1,176 deaths from chest affections in the year 1916. Even in regard to such common diseases, the Churches have work to do, and a noble and a necessary work it is.

(*To be Continued.*)

Reports.

Unity Guild.—On November 10th the Guild gave an entertainment to wounded soldiers in the Lecture Hall, which seemed to be much enjoyed by the men. Cards, dramatic sketches, songs, and dancing constituted the chief items in the programme, not to mention tea, which was served about half way through the evening. An interesting Concert was held on November 14th in York Street School Room.

The last meeting of this year will be held on December 12th in Rosemary Hall, when the Rev. W. H. Townley-Tilson is to lecture on "A Trip to Donegal."

* *

Antrim.—A very successful Harvest Service was held in Antrim on Sunday afternoon, October 21st, at 3-30. The church was tastefully decorated by the ladies of the congregation, and a large congregation assembled to hear Rev. W. H. Townley Tilson, M.A., of Greyabbey. It was Mr. Tilson's first visit to Antrim, and those who had the privilege of hearing him expressed the hope that he would re-visit Antrim ere long. Miss Houston added greatly to the praise service by singing two solos, entitled, "We Praise Thee, O God, for Thy great Mercies," and "The Lord is my Shepherd." Miss Smith officiated at the organ, and the music was excellent.

* *

Belfast—First Church.—On the first three Sunday evenings in November special sermons were preached by the Minister on "The Protestant Reformation"—(1) "What it Was," (2) "What it Did," (3) "What it

means." They proved very attractive, large attendances characterising all, and the last being responsible for the largest congregation. On the last Sunday evening in November the organist and an augmented choir gave a very fine rendering of "The Messiah," Part I., and it was much appreciated by the many people present.

At a recent meeting of members of the above congregation, the war activities of the members for the forthcoming winter were determined. It was decided to continue the monthly collection for the Red Cross Society, as well as the monthly meeting for receiving comforts for the soldiers and sailors. Further, it was agreed to make a united effort to help our prisoners of war in Germany. As considerably over £1,200 was raised by the congregation for war objects during the last two winters, all were agreed that such good work should continue.

* *

Ballycarry.—On the third Sunday in October Harvest Services were held, the preacher morning and evening being the Minister, Rev. W. G. Marsden. The church, recently painted, and a new heating apparatus installed, was most beautifully decorated, one of the features of the decorations being a little stack of corn made by the treasurer of the church, Mr. James Magowan. There was a plentiful supply of vegetables and all kinds of fruit. Of the vegetables, remarkably fine specimens were kindly given by Mr. Wright, of Magheramorne, and also by members and friends of the congregation. The morning service was largely attended, but at the evening service many failed to gain admission. Very beautiful music on the Carnegie Organ was discoursed by Mr. William Richards, of Whitehead, the choir rendering special hymns. Among the ladies assisting at the decorations were—The Misses Adrain, M'Meekin, Millan, the Misses Hamilton, Mrs. Shaw, Millar, Mrs. M'Callion, and others.

* *

Clough.—With profound regret we announce the death of Hugh Robinson, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Robinson, of Tubbacorn. The deceased was 25 years of age, a popular and promising young man, of fine physique and fine character, one of the flower of our race. He had been in Canada for the last six years, and at the outbreak of war joined the Canadian force, and came over to fight for the old country. He had been in Flanders a considerable time, bearing an active part in all the glorious achievements of the Canadians, but on Thursday, November 1st, his parents received word from the War Office to the effect that he had made the supreme sacrifice, and was buried on the 25th ult. We all extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family in their deep sorrow. May God cheer and uplift their heavy hearts, and may they be consoled by the thought that as a true hero he laid down his life for his friends. The deceased is the second of our young men to make the supreme sacrifice. The first was Robert Kirkpatrick, who was killed on July 1st, 1916, and whose brother, Sergeant Joseph Kirkpatrick, D.C.M., is now in hospital at Bristol, having been wounded the second time.

* *

Downpatrick.—The Harvest Thanksgiving Services were conducted by Rev. E. H. Pickering, of All Souls', Belfast, on Sunday, 14th October. The venerable edifice was beautifully decorated with flowers, foliage, plants, fruit, and corn. Solos by Mrs. Fletcher, Belfast; Rev. J. Dare Davies, of Clough, and Miss Lily Irvine, of Rathmullan, greatly added to the devotional value of the services. An augmented choir, with Miss M. Crickard kindly presiding at the harmonium, rendered the harvest hymns. The attendances were large both morning and evening.

* *

Glenarm.—This congregation has lost three young men in the great struggle that is convulsing a large part of the world. In March, 1916, Private Hugh Montgomery, R.I.R., Straidkilly, was killed by a shell. In August last Private Joseph Ogilby, R.I.R., Carnlough, was reported missing, believed killed. Information has been received by his

relatives, who reside at Carnalbana, that Private Daniel Boyle, Canadian Infantry, died from wounds received in action on 29th October. All honour to their memory, and success to the cause of truth, justice, liberty, and honour, for which they gave up their lives. We wish to express sincere sympathy with their relatives in the great loss they have sustained.

* *

Holywood.— Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held on Sunday, October 28th, and the following day. The church was very tastefully decorated, and the services well attended, especially on the Sunday evening, when the church was well filled. The preacher at the Sunday services was the Rev. Kenneth Dunbar, M.A., of Comber, whose interesting discourses were much appreciated. Mr. Dunbar also conducted a Children's Service in the afternoon. At the Monday evening service there was again a large congregation, and a harvest cantata, "The Rolling Seasons," was effectively rendered by an augmented choir, and an address given by the Minister.

* *

Killinchy.—A large gathering of the Remonstrant Congregation with other friends assembled on November 3rd to do honour to the Minister and his family. A committee of ladies had arranged a Social Evening, which proved most enjoyable. Grace was said by the Rev. Kenneth Dunbar, M.A., and an excellent tea, provided by the ladies of the congregation, was much appreciated. The chair was taken by Mr. R. F. Shaw, who explained the object of the gathering, and at the same time observed that the presentation about to be made was thoroughly well deserved. He then called on Mr. F. J. Orr, of Ballystockhart, to make the presentation to Mr. and Mrs. Williams. After expressing his pleasure at being present, Mr. Orr said that Mr. and Mrs. Williams had been settled in Killinchy for quite a number of years, and had endeared themselves not only to the members of their own congregation, but to the entire community. During this time the congregation had steadily progressed. The speaker spoke in eulogistic terms of the pastoral work of the Minister, and also of the deep and practical interest manifested by Mrs. Williams in the affairs of the church and not least in the musical part of the services. Mr. Orr also stated that from the moment the subject of a testimonial was mentioned it was heartily taken up, especially by the ladies, and was enthusiastically carried through to a successful issue. The congregation hoped that Mr. and Mrs. Williams may both be blessed with good health and happiness, and long spared to carry on their labours in Killinchy. At the conclusion of his speech Mr. Orr handed Mr. Williams a cheque for £76 9s. 6d. In reply, the Rev. D. J. Williams said that, in receiving this handsome present, he desired to express the sincere obligations of his wife and himself for the kind feelings which prompted the giving of so substantial a token of their appreciation and esteem. He would like to remind them that this was not a solitary instance of their loyalty and kindness to himself as Minister. He and his wife had been made to feel in many ways, by numerous individual kindnesses, that they had a place in their regard, and had received much sympathy, good will, and practical kindness through the nine years of their life in Killinchy. Mr. T. Lindsay, treasurer of the congregation, said that he associated himself with every word Mr. Orr had so well and so effectively spoken. The Rev. Kenneth Dunbar, in a speech full of sympathy and humour, said that he was glad that this occasion was one that had no note of sadness in it, there being no farewell to be spoken that night. The chairman read letters of apology from the Rev. J. J. Magill, who was unable to be present, and also from Rev. A. Whitford. The meeting afterwards settled down to the enjoyment of an entertainment provided by the young people of the congregation. The singing of God Save the King brought a memorable social evening to a close.

* *

Larne.—Harvest Services were held here on Sunday, 4th November, when

there were fairly good congregations, especially in the evening. The weather, unfortunately, was not ideal. The usual harvest hymns and other music were rendered spiritedly and with much sweetness, although the choir was undermanned and not so strong as usual in the female departments. The anthem, "While the earth remaineth," was given with clear enunciation and deep religious feeling and fervour, especially the soprano solo, "Oh taste and see." Needless to say that Mr. Holmes' contributions on his superb organ were to the full what the congregation and his musical friends have come to expect. In addition to other pieces he gave the "Gloria" from the Mass in B flat (Farmer), and the chorus "Great and Glorious" (Haydn), and perhaps the most touchingly devout and reverent item was the short vesper with which the evening service concluded. Rev. Eustace Thompson, of Cairncastle, conducted the evening service, and read Dr. Martineau's magnificent sermon, "Right of War," a not inappropriate subject when it is borne in mind what a harvest is falling daily to the sickle of the great reaper—Death. Composed and delivered as it was originally to congregations including savants in art, literature, and science, and couched in most dignified language, as might be expected from the foremost philosopher of the last century, to say nothing of difficulties of voice and speaking on the part of the reader, it is feared that the audience did not derive full benefit from this wondrous sermon. Inasmuch as a collection had been taken up on Preparation Sunday on behalf of Larne Nursing Society, and that a goodly sum had been contributed since privately by members of the congregation and by the Sunday school scholars wherewith to provide and send to our lads who are perilling life and limb little tokens of our kind remembrance at Christmastide, there was no special collection.

* *

Moira, Co. Down. – Successful Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held on Sunday, October 28th, conducted in the morning by the Minister, the Rev. W. Weatherall, and in the evening by the Rev. J. A. Kelly (Dunmurry). The church was most beautifully decorated by the ladies with corn, fruit, vegetables, and flowers, supplied by the members and friends of the congregation. Two special features were the large quantity of chrysanthemums sent by the treasurer, Mr. W. J. Agnew, and the long festoons of chestnuts, by some of the Sunday School children.

In the evening a very crowded congregation listened with great interest and appreciation to Mr. Kelly's eloquent discourse. Mr. Ernest Worth, Belfast, took charge of the music, and an augmented choir led the hearty singing of the harvest hymns. Stainer's fine anthem, "Ye shall dwell in the Land," was given, the solos being taken by Mr. Shaw and Miss Adams. Later Miss Adams also sang "God shall wipe away all tears." We regret that some people were unable to gain admission to the church, which was closely packed to the utmost limits. The collections for the day were good.

* *

Moneyrea, Co. Antrim. — Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held on Sunday and Monday, October 14th and 15th. The Rev. W. H. Townley Tilson, M.A., of Greyabbey, conducted the midday service on Sunday. His sermon on the text, "One soweth and another reapeth," was greatly appreciated. The evening service was conducted by the Minister, Rev. A. Whitford.

On Monday evening weather conditions greatly interfered with our congregation. This was much to be regretted, as a very helpful sermon was preached by Rev. M. Watkins on "The Gospel of Autumn." The church was tastefully decorated for the occasion, there being an excellent show of flowers, fruits, vegetables, etc., which were given to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. Our collections amounted to £13 15s.

The Annual Congregational Soiree was held on Friday evening, October 26th. There was a good attendance in spite of exceedingly unpleasant weather. We were favoured with a

visit from several of our Mountpottinger friends, who entertained us with music and recitations.

A pleasing feature of the evening was a presentation to Mr. and Mrs. James Blair, on the occasion of their marriage. This was made by the Choir, Temperance Guild, and Sunday School Committee. Miss S. Spence, in making the presentation, spoke very appreciatingly of the active interest which Mr. and Mrs. Blair had shown in each of those three departments of our church life. They had worked assiduously for a number of years, and it was a privilege to make a small recognition of their services. On behalf of our church she extended to them our well-wishes for their future. Mr. Blair suitably acknowledged the gift. After the entertainment tea was provided, and an hour's social intercourse closed a pleasant evening.

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